Intercaste Relations among Dalits: A Study of Rural Maharashtra

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This Thesis Dedicated to My Late Father

Suresh Walde

DECLARATION

I, Nikhil Walde, hereby declare that this dissertation titled **"Intercaste Relations among Dalits: A Study of Rural Maharashtra"** is the outcome of my own study undertaken under the guidance of Dr. Suryakant Waghmore, Chairperson, Centre for Social Justice and Governance, School of Social Work, School of Research Methodology, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai. It has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma, or certificate of this Institute or of any other institute or university. I have duly acknowledged all the sources used by me in the preparation of this dissertation.

22nd March 2016

Signature of the Student

Nikhil Walde

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the dissertation **"Intercaste Relations among Dalits: A Study of Rural Maharashtra"** is the record of the original work done by Mr. Nikhil Suresh Walde under my guidance. The results of the research presented in this dissertation have not previously formed the basis of the award of any degree, diploma or certificate of this or any other university.

22nd March 2016

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BJP ……Bhartiya Janta Party

BSP ……...Bahujan Samaj Party

MHA …….Manvi Haq Abhiyan

MP …….Member of Parliament

OBC ……..Other Backward Castes

RPI …….Republican Party of India

SC ……..Scheduled Caste

ST ……..Scheduled Tribe

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Abstract

Dalits being a marginalized and the stigma of lower caste attached to them have faced many problems in the society. As a caste group Dalits (Scheduled Castes) are not the homogeneous community there are many castes within, which perpetuate inequality and differences in them. There are vast literature available on the study of Dalits, their marginalization and struggle against the caste system. But this literature is largely focus on the Dalits movements, their history and struggles dominated by Mahars. There are very few academic literature which deals with the study on Mahar, Mang and Chambhar together which could talked of their socio-political and economic relations with each other and their role in forming the common identity in contemporary Maharashtra. Therefore, this study "Intercaste Relations among Dalits" become so important, which have been chosen to study and analyze the complexities and differences between Mahar, Mang and Chambhar perpetuate by the traditional caste system and divergent ideological orientation in them. This study is also important not merely to see the differences in them but also to explore some commonness they share in their social, political and economic relations with each other after the 67 years of independence in contemporary Maharashtra.

Key words: Dalit, Caste, Intercaste, Maharashtra, Differences, Commonness, Struggle.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

Caste system is a unique feature of Indian society. The caste identity largely become a base to govern the social, economic and political behaviour of the people in India. The caste is not a homogeneous unit where every individual has the same identity rather, it has divided into many castes and sub castes. According to the Hindu social system, society is based on the hierarchical social order, namely Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra. This Varna based on the hierarchy is the central and functional element of the caste system which is governed by the concept of purity and pollution (Louis, 2004). It is obligatory for each Hindu to confine their relationship within their Jati (Caste) so as to maintain the purity in marital relationship, exchange of food and in the occupation. Dalits historically did not have place into Hindu hierarchical social order, they were considered to be impure by their caste, hence treated as outcaste and considered as untouchables. According to Ambedkar 'Hinduism is primarily based on the caste system, a system which encourages aloofness, inequality and exploitation' (Ambedkar)[1], and this is the base for the exploitation of the masses especially Dalits.

1.1 CATEGORISATION OF DALITS

Dalits have the long history of marginalization and discrimination by the dominant castes. The word 'Dalits' implies those who have been broken, reduce to pieces and ground down by those above them in a deliberate and active way (Zelliot, 1996). The constitution of India recognized Dalits or untouchables as a Scheduled Castes[2]. However, this SC category is not a homogeneous one, there are many different castes in it known by different names across India. In Maharashtra they are known as Mahar, Chambhar, Mang, Dhor and so on. Scheduled Caste population in Maharashtra constitutes 11.8%[3] out of which Mahars,

[1] Baba Sahib's Quotable Quotes, *Ambedkar Chair Department of Economics & Rural Development.* Dr. R M L Avadh University, Faizabad.

[2] Thorat, S. (2009). *Dalits in India: Search for a Common Destiny.* New Delhi: SAGE Publications Pvt. Ltd

[3] http://pibmumbai.gov.in/English/PDF/E2013_PR798.PDF

Chambhars and Mangs alone constitute approximately 90%. Hence this study emphasis on these three main castes and study their Intercaste relations with each other.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In Maharashtra, the upper castes Marathas, Kunbis and Brahmins are the dominant castes who have largely been committing atrocities on Dalits as a whole and discriminate against them as they claim higher social status over them. Any attempts from the Dalits to rise socio-economically resulted into violence against them from the so called upper castes. In the village economy the Mahar, Mang and Chambhar had the distinct occupations like Mahars were the village watchman and also worked as removing the dead animals from the village, Chambhars were doing leather work and shoe makers and Mangs were the Drum and Rope Makers. Although their traditional occupations were different the social and ritual position were the same in the eyes of upper caste Hindus and Brahmins, hence, they were treating all these caste groups as untouchables. One of the reason for this could be these jobs were consider as the degraded and polluting to the Brahmins and upper caste Hindus.

As a marginalized and discriminated community they perhaps be one however, they have not come together to form the unity to fight against the injustice. Like (Patwardhan, 1968) writes; "Dalits as "a caste groups (Chambhar Mahar, Mang etc.) shares a certain identity as have been belonged in the past to the polluting castes and in having cultural affinities and general historical background. They have been experiencing the similar ritual position, economic and socio-economic deprivation which have not however, brought about uniformity in mobility and movement within themselves"[4]. How could this phenomenon be study in the contemporary Maharashtra where on the one hand there are differences of castes among Dalits and on the other hand there are some caste groups within Dalits come and assert the conception of equality, liberty and democracy? For example the Mang community as studied by Swapnil Dhanraj[5] a PHD Scholar from JNU, he writes: "the

[4] Patwardhan, S. (1968). Social Mobility and Conversion of Mahars. *Sociological Bulletin, 17*, 187-202.

[5]**Swapnil Dhanraj** is a Ph.D Scholar at Center for the Study of Social Systems, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. His Article, ***Matang Community of Maharashtra: Re-Examining Inequality From Within*** **(16 April, 2014),** ***Countercurrent.***

Mangs have accepted the Annabhau Sathe as Dalit leader who have fight for the Annihilation of caste through his literature. His writing have helped to strengthen the assertion of this community and though the Mang celebrates Annabhau Sathe as their leader, they harmoniously follow Ambedkar as an icon of Dalit movement". Second example is the study done by Suryakant Waghmore in his work *Civility against Caste*, in which he deals with the topic *Beyond Mahar Dominance: The Making of Phule-Ambedkarite Mangs in MHA*, suggests that Mangs are following Phule-Ambedkarite ideology which was before dominated by Mahars. These Mangs in Beed District now assert their power and identity with Mahars together to resist against the brahminical social order and dominant socio-political structure.

It's a general phenomenon in India when we look at the relationship between Brahmins and Dalits in which Brahmins are consider to be the high caste and Dalits are the lowest caste in the social hierarchy. In this Social Hierarchy whatever will be changed among them but their social status will remain the same where Dalits cannot rise or get the position of Brahmins in it. As (Pathwardhan, 1968) assert, "in Hindu society, attempt to go higher in the traditional system have been complicated because hierarchy is determined by birth." Similarly when we analyse this phenomenon among Mahar, Mang and Chambhar one can question that does the same phenomenon prevails among them where despite having the same ritual position or social status they have ranked themselves on the caste line? Or there is a space for them to come together under the category of Dalit and enjoy the equal treatment for each caste group among them. This remain the larger question and need a significant probe and analysis in this directions which this study is trying to analyse.

In other words this study going to analyse what are differences and what common Mahar, Mang and Chambhar enjoy in the contemporary time in Maharashtra. It is therefore, proposed to identify and analyse the Intercaste relations among Dalits. After 67 years of independence what changed around and what are their socio-political and economic relations with each other is studied. It also study the interaction among them in each caste group to understand their mobilization and participation in the political process against the traditional caste rule.

1.3 RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

There are very few studies deal with this topic. Dalits being a marginalized and the stigma of lower caste attached to them have faced many problems in the society. Dalits (Scheduled Castes) are not the homogeneous community there are many castes within it, which have the hierarchy and differences. There are huge literature available on the study of Dalits, their marginalization and struggle against the caste system. But this literature is largely focus on the Dalits movements, their history and struggles dominated by Mahars. There are very few academic literature which deals with the study on Mahar, Mang and Chambhar together which could talked of their socio-political and economic relations with each other and their role in forming the common identity in contemporary Maharashtra. Therefore, this topic "Intercaste Relations among Dalits" have a significance and have been chosen to study and analyse the complexities and differences between Mahar, Mang and Chambhar perpetuate by the traditional caste system and divergent ideological orientation in them. This study is also important not merely to see the differences in them but also to explore some commonness they share in their social, political and economic relations with each other after the 67 years of independence in contemporary Maharashtra.

1.4 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To examine the complexities of Inter-caste relations among Dalits.
- To analyse the caste and question of Dalits in contemporary Maharashtra.
- To identify and analyse the forms of interactions among Dalits.
- To explore social, political and economic changes and status of caste within Dalits.
- To analyse the nature of mobility of different caste among Dalits, against the traditional caste rules.

1.5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

a) Area of the Study

The universe of the study was a village called Temburdo in Saoner block of the Nagpur District of Maharashtra. Through the regress work in finding the village for this study, researcher have gone through various villages in Kalmeshwar, Nagpur and Saoner blocks of the Nagpur district. After the laborious task to find the village for this study the researcher found a village called Temburdoh in Saoner block. The researcher selected this

village because here researcher found the adequate numbers or representations of Mahar, Mang and Chambhar castes where also had the adequate representation of other dominant castes that are OBCs. Therefore, in order to study the Intercaste relations among these three caste within Dalits this village signifying the best case. These inter-castes relations are largely their social, economic and political relations with each other to understand the complexities and commonness of their relationship and the mobility that these three caste group have achieved in the contemporary Maharashtra. In order to find a village for the propose study, the researcher has gone through a piolet study in which he first collected the population wise census data of the Schedule caste in Nagpur district. Then according to the population the researcher have selected some villages in three Blocks of Nagpur district which have adequate SC population.

To carry the piolet study the researcher have selected three blocks namely, Kalmeshwar Nagpur rural and Saoner. In these three blocks the researcher have gone through the selected villages and meat with the Gram Sarpanch (Village Head man) of each villages visited, because he is the first official person of the village whom I should talk on village matters and get permission for the research study of the village. I explained about myself and my research study to each Gram Sarpanch of the villages and from him I conformed the caste wise population of the villages from his official records, where in first two blocks researcher found the inadequate representation of Mahar, Mang and Chambhar castes. Some villages were having adequate Mahar and Mang population but significantly missing Chambhar population and some villages were having Mahar and Chambhar Population but missing Mang or having the very less representation of all these three caste together. This kind of caste representations could not be feet for my research study so researcher moved on to the third block to search for a village which has a good representation of all three castes.

Finally a village “Temburdo” have been selected for the study by the researcher which has the proper representation of Mahar, Mang and Chambhar castes in which this study is based. The village Temburdo in Saoner block is 35 km. away from the main Nagpur city. The total population of the village is 1100. The main castes which lives in the village are

Schedule Castes (Mahar, Chambhar and Mang), OBC (Kunbhi, Vani, Kumbhar, Dhivar), and Tribes (Gond, Govari and Dhangar). The percent wise distribution of the population is SC constitute 55%, OBC 32% and ST 8%. Within SC the Mahar constitute 48%, Chambhar 30%, Mang 21% and there is only one family of Dhor community. This village is a base for this study from which the researcher have collected data. This study is limited to this geographical location only particularly limited to this village based on the data collected.

The rationale behind selecting the Nagpur district to study Intercaste relations among Dalits is, it has a historical importance in the life of Dalits as Ambedkar embraced Buddhism in Nagpur District in 1956 with his lacks of followers. This movement of religious conversion was great move in the history of Dalits in which millions of Dalits have followed their leaders. "The conversion to Buddhism is the latest stage in a continuous seeking for escape from a dominant traditions of Hindu culture and a system which resist change."[6] This religion gives them new values of liberty, equality and fraternity that enable them to stand against the exploitative social system. Thus, studying Intercaste relations among Dalits in this particular geographical area have shown some positive changes in the file of Dalits. Though the Mahars who were the majority group have accepted Buddhism on the call of Ambedkar, this conversion movement however, have left some positive influences on other Dalit communities like Chambhars and Mangs of this region altogether. These positive changes can be seen from the study of this village in which all Dalits communities like Mahar, Mang and Chambhar shown their integrity in their socio-cultural and economic interactions with each other. Therefore, in order to understand this Intercaste relations among Dalits this area particularly this village signifies the best case.

b) Research Design

The research design employed for the present study is qualitative in nature. The "qualitative research which claims to describe life-worlds from the inside out, from the perspective of the people who participated in the research study. By so doing the qualitative research

[6] FISKE, A. M. (1969). RELIGION AND BUDDHISM AMONG INDIA'S NEW BUDDHISTS. *Social Research*, 123-157.

seeks to contribute to a better understanding of social realities and to draw attention to processes, meaning patterns and structural features"[7] (Flick, Kardorff and Steinke, 2004). This qualitative study is design as exploratory and analytical.

c) Research Technique and Tools

In this method In-depth interviews Schedule have been prepared and nine key Person/respondent from the village have been selected for the interview. These nine respondents have been selected by using the purposive sampling method to achieve the set objectives. These nine respondents are the key persons of the village including the voice sarpanch of the village panchayat belongs to Mahar community. The Non-participatory observation has been performed on different events and occasions like the various programmes during Ambedkar Birth Anniversary and Buddha's Birth Anniversary in the village to observe the participation and interactions of Mahars, Mangs and Chambhars with each other in the events. The secondary literature or sources have largely been used for this study, which includes the various Marathi published works, Journal's Articles, Books, and magazines on the Dalits issues, their history and movements.

d) Data Analysis Plan

The data is analysed in third chapter with its four different sub topics by using the Narratives from the data collected from the field. It will first focus on discussing what is caste and question of Dalits in contemporary Maharashtra by historicizing the problem of caste in the context of Dalits. Further in second sub topic it will discuss the socio-economic and political relations of Mahar, Mang and Chambhar by exhausting their daily interaction patterns and their participations in various socio-cultural functions or celebrations with each other by using the narratives to support the arguments.

e) Data Collection Experiences

[7] Flick, U., Von Kardorff, E., & Steinke, I. (2004). What is qualitative research? An introduction to the field. *A companion to qualitative research*, 3-11.

Though the researcher have done a field work in Marathwada region of Maharashtra during his graduation, where he worked with communities and conducted some awareness programmes and also participated in one survey process of Zilha Parishad, Osmanabad on the issue of sanitation and eco-friendly village. Through this survey researcher have filled the questionnaire forms from the village communities that was his first experience of collecting Data form the community. However, this new experiences of data collection for his own research work was entirely different. Here in the Tembhurdo village as an individual researcher spent many days for the data collection. Taking interviews of the participants was little challenging for the researcher, as it is a purposive sampling method, researcher had to wait for the key respondents from the village to conduct their interviews. Researcher got very good response from the participants while collecting data, it was very new and unique experience for the researcher as well as for the participants as they were finding it interesting in talking on their own issues and concerns.

Sometime people were hesitating to talk with researcher even they afraid to participate in the interview. As they were thinking that the researcher had come from any government organisation or any company or something so will extract all the internal information from them and then they will have to suffer from it. But when I was explaining them that I am a student from Mumbai, came for a research study in this village then only they used to talk and participate in the interview process. Then after being familiar they treat the researcher well and gave their valuable time for research interviews.

1.6 SCOPE AND LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

There are very few academic literature which deals with the study on Mahar, Mang and Chambhar together which could talked of their socio-political and economic relations with each other and their role in forming the common identity in contemporary Maharashtra. Therefore, this topic “Intercaste Relations among Dalits” become so important and have been chosen to study and analyse the complexities and differences between Mahar, Mang and Chambhar perpetuate by the traditional caste system and divergent ideological orientation in them. The scope of this study is it does not merely looking at the differences in them but also to explore some commonness they share in their social, political and

economic relations with each other after the 67 years of independence in contemporary Maharashtra.

The limitation of this study is, it merely deals with three main castes within Dalits namely, Mahar, Mang and Chambhar in Maharashtra. It is under the topic of the research, "Intercaste Relations among Dalits", it focused on socio-political and economic relations of Mahar, Mang and Chambhar with each other which is limited to the Rural Maharashtra only. More specifically it is limited to the village called Temburdoh in Saoner block of Nagpur district from where the researcher have collected data for the study.

1.7 SCHEMATIC MAP

This dissertation have framed around four chapters including introduction and conclusion. Chapter one is the introduction which give some historical background to Dalits and their movement. It discussed who are Dalits and what are different caste within it especially the three main caste on which this study is based. In other words this chapter opens up the study by discussing its background with stating its clear objectives. It also deals with the methodological part in which it discuss what are the research methods have been used for this study.

Second chapter is the review of literature which deals with the available literature on the said study. This chapter debates on studies done on Dalits as a uniform identity against the dominant structure and argues that there is need to conduct the study on differences and unity among Dalits themselves as it is not the homogeneous category. It sites certain studies done on this direction and finds the gap in which focus should be given.

Third chapter is based on the field work in which primary data have been analysed by using some of the responses of respondents as a narratives to support the arguments. In this chapter data have been analysed on four different sub themes as have discussed in the data analysis plan.

Fourth chapter is the conclusion which briefly concludes the overall study done. It will cover sub topic like, dynamics of caste relations, in which it is focus on how the discourse of caste within Dalits have changed and now what new aspiration Mahar, Mang and Chambhar are looking for. At last this chapter is discussing what social mobility and change have been happened among Mahar, Mang and Chambhar against the traditional system of caste by contesting or challenging its very domination over other within them.

1.8 ETHICAL CONCERN

For this study some of the ethical concern researcher had. First was how to take permission from the people to conduct the researcher. To overcome this issue researcher meet with the Sarpanch of the village introduce himself to sarpanch and informed him that he is going to conduct research in the village with certain communities. To get the permission from the sarpanch the researcher have submitted the permission latter collected from the college (TISS) to the sarpanch and got his permission to undertake this study in the village. Researcher also got the permission from the people whom he is studying. Second important ethical issue was the researcher's own personal biases and opinion. These biases and opinion should not come in the way of research while interviewing Mahar, Mang and Chambhar separately, researcher being neutral have given all three communities fair consideration and balanced chance to participate in the research.

Chapter 2
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

There are enormous Dalit literature is available in many different languages, which deal with the Dalits history, their discrimination, marginalization, identity, politics, assertiveness and so on. These literatures have been articulated through different biographies, auto-biographies, research, articles, books publications etc. written by many different scholars in India and outside India. There is also a significant contribution of the songs, poems and dramas to express the life and struggle of the Dalits in the society.

2.1 DISCOURSE OF CASTE AND DALIT AS UNIFORM IDENTITY

Most of Dalits literatures have focused on the study of Dalits as uniform lower caste identity in relation to the Brahmin's domination over them. Several works deal with the study of Dalit Movements, their struggles and marginalization in the society against the persisting upper castes hegemony in different period of time. On the same note the Indian scholars like Gopal Guru, Kancha Illihia, Sukhdev Thorat, Sudha Pai, Narendra Jadhav, Harish Wankhede, Ghure etc. have extensively written on Dalits and caste system with their in depth understanding and experiences of Indian Society which predominantly based on the caste. More interestingly, even the foreign scholars such as Gail Omvedt, Christopher Jafferlot, Eleanor Zelliot etc. have shown their keen interest in this rigid and complex system of India. It can be seen from their different scholarly works in this direction that have produced the immense significantly important Dalit literature. But, it merely generate the idea of rigidity of caste system and its very impact on lowers as. Since, over a period of time the discourse of caste system has been changed explicitly which again make diversification in their internal relations in one caste group (Dalits).

However, above works does not significantly concern the inter-caste relations among Dalits in a way to bring this discourse into the mainstream academic debate regarding their differences and commons they share in their various social, political and economic sphere. Similarly, the commonness shared by these caste group resulted into positive impact of their political assertion. For instance, the ethnographic study in Beed district of

Maharashtra on the topic *Beyond Mahar Domination: Making of Phule-Ambedkarite Mang* (Waghmore, 2002) reveals how the Mang caste socially and politically assert through the Ambedkarite ideology to fight against the injustice and dominant 'upper caste' hegemony. This political mobilization and consciousness among Mangs is the positive step that they have been participating in various activities of MHA which has its roots in the historical marginalization of these community and as a result have been contributing in the society through Ambedkarite Buddhist ideology. This kind of socio-political assertion within Dalits need to be study in contemporary Maharashtra which lacks in the mainstream academic discourse.

(N. Burra, 1986), *'Was Ambedkar Just a Leader of the Mahars?',* argued: among Dalits, the Ambedkar only supported the Mahars and because of him only the Mahars have got the disproportionate share of benefit, which should have gone to all the Dalits, and hence, the other castes especially the Chambhar and Mang have not supported the Ambedkar and talk against him. It is also been observed that the perception of other Dalit castes about the "Mahar Buddhist"[8] is negative.

E. Zelliot, 2001, in her book *'From untouchable to Dalit'* Wrote about the different occupations of Dalits where she relates their works and said that the traditional occupation of Mahars was the village servant acting as a village watchman, Chambhar were the leather and shoe worker and Mangs were doing the basket and rope making work. During the British rule the new opportunities for the Mahars were open, they were free and praised to take whatever new work were presented. Whereas the other untouchable castes in Maharashtra like Chambhar and Mang carried out their traditional work in modern life. Due to the new opportunity the Mahars' position as the inferior village servant lost its significance with new method of communication, colonial justice system and government.

[8] Mahar Buddhists are also been called as neo Buddhist. This Mahar Buddhist are largely from the Mahar community in Maharashtra who renounce Hinduism and converted into Buddhism on a call of their leader Dr. Ambedkar. This conversion have happened in Nagpur district of Maharashtra where Dr. Ambedkar with his lacs of followers (Which constitute Largely Mahars) have took a Diksha of Buddhism in 1956. Since then the Mahar people have been called as Mahar Buddhist.

This study was more focused in explaining the development of Mahars as against the major castes within Dalits who could not come out from the traditional caste boundaries.

(G. Wankhede, 2001) in his work *"Educational inequalities among the scheduled castes"* writes; each caste among Dalits has different social and cultural identity maintained by the social hierarchy and the practices of untouchability. There are 59 castes in Maharashtra within scheduled castes, each caste has different responses to socio-political, economic and education opportunities, in such a diversity and situation is it worth expecting to have equal response to the social and educational progress is a big question. These caste differences among Dalits resulted in the differences of the social, political, economic and religious identity. Ambedkar in his life has thoroughly criticized the system of caste and tried to unite the Dalits through different means, the conversion to Buddhism was one of the major moves to unite them, and it was an effort to bring them in the life of equality, liberty and fraternity. Only Mahars who were in majority accepted the Buddhism, it would be their inclination towards Ambedkar and as stanch follower of his ideological orientation they accepted the call of their leader and embraced Buddhism. However, in contemporary situation of Maharashtra we could witness the instances of other castes within Dalits who have been fallowing the same path and asserting the Ambedkarite identity and also converted to Buddhism, for Example the participants and the leader of the *Maanvi Haqaa Abhiyan* (MHA) formed by the Mang community follows and assert with the same Ambedkarite Buddhist identity, to which Mahars also supports (S. Waghmore, 2010). This example can be seen that there is now not only Mahars but the Mangs also claim to be an Ambedkarite and Buddhist. This legacy have not been study so far in academics, except the S. Waghmore's, *Cilility against Caste, 2010.* This study simply focuses on one particular caste (Mang) within Dalit after Mahars, who asserted their Ambedkarite identity. However, the extent and pattern of social interactions among and between other Scheduled Castes needs an empirical probe although the social stigma and social hierarchy continues to persist among these castes.

(Beltz, 2005), in his book, *Mahar, Buddhist and Dalit,* writes about the caste and sub-caste, where he emphasizes on the sub-caste within Mahars, and explain Mahars were divided

into various sub-caste. But a now days it don't play an important role in a matrimonial relation than they did before. Still the Intercaste marriages, he explains; there had been many Intercaste marriages between them. Intercaste marriage between Mahar Buddhist male and the Maratha female is common, but there are also an instances in Nagpur where the Maratha male have married the Buddhist female. However he argues these Intercaste marriages happen in the urban settings only. It is there in urban settings the people enjoy some freedom and dare to marry out of their caste, without seeking their parent's opinion. This phenomenon is not limited to the Buddhist community only it is quite common in India, and the part of all the communities. Thus, criticism to the caste system in favor of the Intercaste marriages is politically correct. But in the context of daily living the matrimonial choices fallow their own social reasoning.

(Dangle, 2011) His work, '*Ambedkari Chalwaliche Antarang*' argues that, the history of Dalit movement, truly starts from the Ambedkar's movement. However in this movement also, except Mahars other Dalits did not participate despite Ambedkar's claim that he is not a leader of Mahars only but the leader of all the depressed castes or untouchables. There is a need to reproduce this history again because the so called Ambedkarite and Buddhists keep on saying that, in the Ambedkarite movement, there was no participation from the other castes within Dalits then how can today they will come together? The author further says; this kind of people have never truly understood Ambedkar. Ambedkar was aware of the unity of all the Dalits together and hence, he established the Republican Party and wrote its vision and mission to use this party as a political weapon against the congress party and Brahminical ideology. He said in this party everyone should be given equal opportunity. The author is trying to say how deeply Ambedkar's thoughts were, he wanted to unite all the Dalits, but nevertheless some have confined or limited him only to Mahars, majority of whom dominated or miss represented the Dalits as a whole in socio, economic and political platform.

(Gokhale, 1993) Argued in the chapter *VI, The RPI and the Politics of Compromise* of her book *'From Concessions to Confrontation',* the late Ambedkar has left two separate legacies to his followers, one was Buddhism which is identified as the creed of ex-Mahars.

And second is the Ripublican Party of India (RPI). These two legacies have created a serious contradiction in the politics of Scheduled Castes, Especially the ex-Mahars, she said, RPI despite of having the "Caste Nutral" name persistently identified as a party of the neo-Buddhist among whom it secured wide and sustained allegiance.

Thus, based on these studies except few work one can understand that, these studies focused in and around Mahar caste and how Mahars have been enjoying their freedom, asserting their Buddhist identity, taking education and political mobilization which helped them to developed their socio-economic condition. However, there is a lack of literature and studies, which have been done on the Intercaste relations among Mahar, Mang and Chambhar in order to understand what are their social, political and economic relations with each other, how they interact with each other in their daily life, their social and political mobilization and most importantly their commonness and unity against the traditional caste system, despite of their caste differences need to be studied. These all are missing from the entire Dalit literature, more importantly from the mainstream academic discourses. Therefore, this study is an effort to meet this gap and tries to meet its objective.

Chapter 3

Differences or Unity of Castes among Dalits: An Analysis based on Study in Maharashtra

Differences and unity of caste among Dalits, this notion is the outcome from the analysis of Dalit movements in Maharashtra through various Dalit literature and the researchers own study conducted in this village. As most of Dalit literatures studied in this research have shown differences in the socio-cultural and political relations within Dalits. Very few Dalit literature have dealt with the unity of castes within them. One of them is (Waghmore, 2002), *Civility against Caste* which deals with the subject of caste unity among Mahar and Mang in Marathwada region of Maharashtra where Mang through participating in *Manvi Haq Abhiyan* (MHA)[9] proclaimed of their rights against human rights violation by upper caste. To this move of Mang community who largely asserts through Ambedkar and Buddhist identity got the support from Mahar community which has its success in Beed district of Marathwada region. Likewise this chapter, differences or unity of caste within Dalits exploring the closeness between them in contemporary Maharashtra which has challenged the existing studies on the differences and antagonistic relationship among Mahar, Mang and Chambhar.

Keeping in view this closeness among Dalits in contemporary Maharashtra, this chapter is merely going to deal with the unity of caste among Dalit through their Socio-cultural, political and economic Intercaste relations with each other, which have shown the close proximity among them. This close proximity through their daily interactions and participations in different socio-cultural programmes have formed the unity of caste among them that will be discussed in this chapter.

3.1 VILLAGE PROFILE

This village is 45 km. away from the main Nagpur city. The total population of the village is 1500. There is one School in the village till 7th standard. One Anganwadi is there, one Buddha Vihar and One Maritu Mandir also there. The Sarpanch of this village is Mr.

[9] *Manvi Haq Abhiyan* MHA is an initiative of the Rural Development Centre and NGO in Beed district started by Eknath Awadh a social activist from the Mang Community. He is a great fallower of Ambedkarite ideology, one of the Panther from Dalit Panther Movement during 1970s. He through its MHA campaign had been fighting against human right violation of Dalit communities in Marathwada region of Maharashtra.

Laxman Chavhan from the Vani Caste (OBC) and Voice Sarpanch is Mr. Santosh Sahare from the Mahar caste (SC). The main castes which lives in the village are Schedule Castes (Mahar, Chambhar, Mang and Dhor), OBCs (Kunbhi, Vani, Kumbhar, Dhivar), and some Schedule Tribes (Gond, Govari and Dhangar). The percent wise population of these communities are, SC constitute 53%, OBC 39% and ST 8%. Within SC the Mahar constitute 48%, Chambhar 30%, Mang 21% and there is only one family of Dhor community (According to data from *Gram Panchayat* office). This village is a base for this study from which the researcher have collected data.

OBCs are high land owning community in this village, among OBCs the Kunbhi caste holds majority of land. Then among small and marginal land holding communities are SC and ST. In SC among Mahars around 60% people have the land, among Chambhar 45% people have the land but among Mang community no one have the land they are land less community in this village. The land hold by Mahars and Chambhars is so minimal, around an average 2 to 3 acre per family (According to data from *Gram Panchayat* office), (See Table below) which as per the people who said it's not enough for the survival. In this piece of land they would hardly meet their substantial need and hence, to supplement for their living they also do some other daily wage labour and small businesses in the village. At large crops which has been taken in the agriculture in this area are cotton, Tur, Wheat and Chana.

3.2 DALITS AND OBCs CASTE RELATIONS

There is one Buddha *Vihar* at the centre of the village and just beside it there is one *Maruti Mandir* (Hanuman Temple) both are situated in the close proximity. In the case of Marathwada region of Maharashtra it has hardly been observed that there is a Buddha Vihar at the centre of the village and just beside it the Hindu temple- As it is not acceptable merely in that region because it belongs to two different caste groups. Latter belongs to "Caste Hindus" consider as "upper caste" and former is to "Dalits" who consider as "lower caste" in which, caste Hindus dominate over Dalits who have their place far from the village centre at the outskirt of the village knowns as *Mahar Wada*. Whereas in this village OBCs and Dalits lives in the same locality. As here if we see from the population point of view the SC population (53%) is more than the OBCs (39%) which shows the domination of

Dalits as they are in majority in this village. More than this there is the unity among Dalits Mahar, Mang and Chambhars live together in this village in the sense that they all come together for any cultural celebration, they have close relationship with each other where they also visit to each other's home. Thought they have their own ghettos in the village but still we can find different caste within Dalits living in close distances. And du to their unity among themselves the OBCs never dare to mess or discriminate with Dalit communities in this village.

As one person from the Mahar community said:

> "Before there were the caste system, the touch of Mang, Mahar and Chambhar consider as pollution to the upper caste, they were even not allowed to stand on the upper caste house's premises. In our village OBCs were practicing it before but now it has reduced because we Dalits are united here."

It can be argue that the unity among Dalits have help them from the domination of the upper caste community in this village and therefore, 'there have not been any caste violence have observed since last decade', says Madhav Madke[10] from Mahar caste. There is one *Smashan Bhumi* (Cremation Ground) for all, where every caste group can go for final cremation of the person. The Sarpanch of this village is from the Vani caste (OBC) and Voice Sarpanch from the Mahar caste (SC) they both run the gram panchayat of this village. While sharing experiences with OBCs the vice sarpanch Mr. Sntosh Sahare says:

> "Before 20 to 25 years the untouchability was so rampant in the village but today through the new generation it has been reduced, because now most of the people having relation with the OBCs as friends and as a classmate other caste people coming together. However even today in the village there are some people who practice caste system. *"Tondavar Bolat nahi pan Mahar Mangacha hat lagla chalet nahi"* (They own't say face to face but the touch of Mahar and Mang is prohibited) I have seen this kind of people also in the village. This situation has been seen between OBCs and Dalits but among Mahar, Mang and Chambhar it is not."

[10] The original names of the participants have changed in this research study whereas the surname (Titles) have kept original.

Socio-political and economic relations between Dalits and OBCs in this village differ with their socio-cultural practices and beliefs. This relations is not as open as between different castes within Dalits. OBCs still consider Dalits as inferior but it could not come directly as there is the majority and the unity of Dalits in the village which do not allow OBCs to dominate over Dalits.

3.3 CASTE AND QUESTIONS OF DALITS

Dalits has the very unique struggle against the very unique problem of India that is caste. Their struggle for the emancipation has its social, political and cultural roots. Social: in which these caste groups have not been given equal social respect, recognition and have been excluded from various major institutions like education and job. Political: in which these caste groups have been denied their own representation in the politics or in the parliament. Cultural: in which these caste groups have been subjugated on the notion of purity and pollution and treated as untouchables. In the context of Maharashtra if we see, the anti-caste discourse have been carried out by Mahatma Phule, Shahu Maharaj and then Ambedkar for the emancipation of Dalits. However, as Anupama Rao (2009) point out that "Dalit emancipation is an unfinished project". Therefore, continuing with their struggle for emancipation, among Dalits Mahars are the one who have been fighting for their rights and social recognition under the leadership of Ambedkar and even post Ambedkar era. The contribution of Mang and Chambhar to this movement is almost less due to differences in social and political ideology. As Neera Burra (1986) explains the relationship between Mahars, Chambhars and Mangs are antagonistic to each other.

Fact given by Neerea Burra on the relationship between Dalits can be challenged in the contemporary Maharashtra where the study done in the village of Nagpur district shows some different picture about the socio-cultural, and economic relationship within Dalits. This study shows that how in contemporary time the discourse of caste within Dalits have been changing in which not only Mahars but Chambhars and Mangs also looking for the caste unity. Following "narration"[11] would help us in this direction.

[11] Narrations in this study have been taken from the field and have extensively used to prove and take a stand against and for of the available literature and study. This narrations have been transcribed from Marathi to English. Transcriptions into English have directly put in the form of narration but in some places important point have been put in Marathi itself for which explanation in English have been given in brackets.

As Sanjay Ingole from the Mang caste says on the caste system:

> "No this kind of think do not happen here. Everyone live together. *sarva jaan eksath basto rahato lok bolavtat jevayla lagnat amhhi sarva javal javal basto tasa kay bhed bhav nahi. Amchi baithak aste sarva jati sobat.* (We all together seat and live, people invites for food in wedding we all seat close to each other, no discrimination happen. We have group meetings with all caste people). *Babasaheb Ambedkaranni sarvanna ek banavle na.. mhanun joo agothercha vittal hota to gela. Mhanun jati bhed nahi ahe.* (Babasaheb Ambedkar made us one, therefore, the untouchability which was there before have gone, hence caste discrimination not there).

Talking about the caste system and traditional occupation Ajit Dongre from the Mang Community says:

> "I don't follow cast system. *Jar maza mulane konti dusrya jati chi mulgi Mangitalibhi tari me support karel* (If my son gets marry with other caste girl still I will support it). *Jat apli sudharli pahije, shikshanakade jasta gele pahije* (Caste system should be change and we should concentrate on education). *Shikshan na gheta aplya paramparik vevsayat lagun jatat apla tasa nahi ahe, shikshan he jarurich ahe jati khatam karnya sathi* (without taking education people get into their traditional occupation, I don't do like that, education must be taken, then only we can end to caste system)."

These were the perspective from the Mang community, but what Chambhars thinks on the caste and other Dalit community let's examine. Mr. Raju Pahade from the Chambhar community says:

> "Caste discrimination is not there among Dalits, we all live together. *Haa OBC samajache lok thodafar 'bhedbhav' (Discrimination) kartat paan aplya Dalit samajat asla bhedbhav ajun mee pahila nahi* (yes people from OBC community in some extend practice discrimination but among our Dalit community I have not seen this)"

One of the persons from the Chambhar community Mr Ravi Pahade talking about Ambedkar, he says:

> "*Jati vevstha amchyat (Dalits) nahi ahe* (Caste system is not between us) we all Mahar, Mang and Chambhar live together."

Kamlesh Madke from the Mahar community speak on the caste system within Dalits:

> "Caste discrimination is not among Dalits. The Mahar, Mang and Chambhar live together they do activities together than the OBC Castes. There is no as such caste discrimination among Mahar, Mang and Chambhar."

It was Chambhars and Mangs who were questioned not supporting Mahars and following their own traditional way of life. On the other hand Mahars also been allege dominating over Chambhar and Mang in political and various government institutions. As one of the Correspondent (1974) writes in EPW: "Mahar-Mang and Mahar-Chambhar antagonism are fact of life in Maharashtra's town and Villages. These antagonisms have got bitterer as the Mahars by virtue of their political organisation have appointed the lion's share of the concessions and privileges extended by the government to the schedule caste." Further it argued: "B. R. Ambedkar was a Mahar and, though he achieved all India status as a leader of the Scheduled Caste, in Maharashtra his influence was limited to Mahars."[12] However, on the contrary it can be argued that this analysis have drown in 1974 retrospect which may not be so relevant in contemporary time of Maharashtra. As above narrations from the Chambhar and Mang communities revels that in this long years of gap there are certain positive changes have happened among Dalits who now rather living in the bitter antagonism share their common belief and unity among Dalits. The questions of caste among Dalits taking new shape in contemporary Maharashtra. This new understanding about Dalits and their relations with each caste groups among them can be best understood through their socio-cultural, economic and political relations with each other in contemporary Maharashtra.

[12] Correspondent, F. a. (1974). Dalit Panthers: Another View. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 715-716.

3.4 GENERIC OVERVIEW OF MAHAR, MANG AND CHAMBHAR RELATIONSHIP

While studying their socio-cultural relations with each other in this village it has been understood that each caste group weather it is Mahar, Mang or Chambhar lives in the proximity and share their common values of non-discrimination and treat each one equally. They visit each other's home, attend marriage functions of different castes and also celebrate different cultural function together. . It cannot be say that their house ae not close to each other's home because where Mahars live there are few homes of Chambhars also even the OBCs home are close to Mahars and Chambhar home. Mangs home are also close to Mahars and Chambhars home. Though in the context of OBCs this village is little different in the sense that it has more SC population than the OBCs therefore, OBCs feel little miserable in this village. In marriage functions among Dalits they come together, participate in marriage rituals and also help each other in hospitality of the guest during marriages. During various *Janyanti* programmes also they come together and organised the programmes in the village. Like in Ambedkar and Buddha Jayanti all Mang and Chambhar comes together with Mahars and help each other to organise the programme. Where they all contribute money for the programme, organised singing cultural event in which all Ambedkar and Buddha songs been played and also they distribute food on these days. These all activities have been done collectively in this village. Seeing the unity of all Dalits (Mahar, Mang and Chambhar) in this village, the OBCs do not dare to disturb Dalits and their programmes. Similarly during Annabhau Sathe Jayanti also all Mahars and Chambhar comes together along with Mang and celebrate this programme. On this day also they contribute money and celebrate it. About Rohidas Jayanti celebration in this village if we see there is no unity among Chambhars itself. Chambhar do not come up and take initiative to celebrate this Jayanti in the village. To this situation Mahars and Mang responds: if they (Chambhars) are not taking initiative and not coming up to celebrate the Rohidas Jayanti then how can we ourselves come to celebrate it. For this Chambhars in themselves believes that this is the problem within themselves that they are not unite in this village. Economic relations among Dalits in this village are close. There is the exchange of money between them, they give money to each other if there is financial need to any one of them. In terms of political relations among Dalits they differ from their political ideology, majority of

them support the congress party as they believes the local leader from this party is good who listen to the people and their problems and try to solve it. On the other hand they also believes on Ambedkar and his ideology which does not necessarily contribute to their support to Ambedkarite political parties like RPI and BSP. However, it is altogether different political issue but in the social and cultural life they are so close to each other and share the equal and common values.

3.5 MAHAR, MANG AND CHAMBHAR INTERCASTE RELATIONS

a) Socio-cultural Relations

The socio-cultural relations among Dalits have been defined through their daily social interactions with each other and their cultural practices which they performed during various vocations. It is significant to study socio-cultural relations among Dalits in order to understand their proximity with each caste group and also to probe weather they follow the caste differences among them without respecting each other's culture. Socio-cultural relations among them can be understand through their interactions in various functions like, marriage, anniversaries *(Jayanti)* of their socio-political leaders, cultural programmes or in their daily interactions of visiting each other's house.

Following narrations would give us little knowledge of how the Intercaste relations in socio-cultural life of Dalits have been maintained.

Mr. Namdeo Ingole who is from Mang community have no land and still continue with his traditional occupation of making rope and broom and also go to play drum in marriage functions and in death ceremony to earn for his livelihood, he says:

> *"Mahar ani Chambhar samajache lok maza ghari yetat sahaj*. *Sarva basna uthana hotach rahate.* (People from Mahar and Chambhar community come to my house normally. All seating and going is continue between us). When they come to home we together have tea and *Nashta*. We treat each other equally and seat together. They also treat me in same manner when I go to their home."

Another person Mr. Yashwant Madke a Buddhist from Mahar community who has 2 acre of land and work as a Farmer and other labour work for his livelihood. He says:

> "We go to other Dalit's home, they treat us nicely, we seat together in the home some time eat food together, they also come to our home seat with us we also eat together in home. Mahar, Mang and Chambhar relations in our Temburdo village is very good we live with each other with togetherness there is no hate rate among us."

Mr. Ravi Pahade from Chambhar community is a Hindu who have one acre of land, work as farmer and also do a small business of selling shoes and plastic rubber sleepers as his occupation. Although this occupation is related to his traditional caste base work but it is not the same as leather work which his forefather were used to do. He says:

> "We go to each other house, whenever we have work we can go, there is no differences in it. In any programme we come together, recently the Buddha Pornima have been celebrated in the village where they have included all of us and we together celebrated it, and also have food together."

Socio-cultural relations among Dalits has it foundation in their day to day life interactions with each other. In their day to day life as compelling from the narrations it can be understood that, there is no any caste boundaries among Dalits to visit each other's home. Mahar, Mang and Chambhar can freely go to each other home where they treat each other as guest. Gong beyond the historical past as has been discussed by some of the authors that the relationship between Dalits were so antagonistic where one caste group could not like another caste group. Largely the Mang and Chambhar had hate and antagonism with the Mahar community because of this they could not form the unity, as a result they have been divided into different fractions and ideology (Correspondent, 1968). They even not used to share food or inter-din together. However in contemporary Maharashtra this situation have changed, now the Dalits can go to each other's home and more importantly they share food with each other. As from above narrations it can be argue that all Dalits gets the equal treatment from each other in which they treat each other humanly, they get the nice treatment and also have breakfast and food together without any caste prejudices. This is the base of their daily interactions which would form the unity of caste in their socio-cultural interactions with each other, let's examine how this caste unity in their Intercaste marriage relations is.

Intercaste Marriages among Dalits

Among socio-cultural events the marriage functions, religious functions and other cultural functions are important events to understand and examine the differences and unity of caste among Dalits. Intercaste marriage is one of the important event to analyse the differences and unity of castes. In this direction to understand the Intercaste marriage relations and other cultural functions among Dalits some of the questions have been asked to the respondent. Like what they think about the Intercaste marriages among them and how they manage marriage, different cultural and religious celebrations of different caste groups in the village.

A person from the Chambhar community Manik Pahade who belongs to Hindu religion is a 10^{th} class educated man. He has two daughters both are studying in 9^{th} and 10^{th} standard but he is little reluctant for the further education of his daughters as he says, "if there is no money, there is no point in continuing the education of the girls hence, "*Joparyanta Shikhau shakto to paryanta shikh ani maag chal amchasobat kaamala* rojivar" (learn till we are be able to spend for learning then, come with us for daily labour work). Having 2 acres of land asserted that:

> "Intercaste marriage should not have happen. If in our own caste people are available then why should go to other caste. *Karnare kartat pan te uchit nahi* watat (But some people do it which doesn't look good). Tyanchi Jat alag ahe amchi jat alag ahe (there caste is different our caste is different). E.g. *Te Buddha Samajache ani amhhi Chambhar samajache mel nahi hou shakat lagnasathi*. (They belongs to Buddhist community and we Chambhar, there cannot be similarities between us for marriage). Same with other caste also. Hence, I do not support Intercaste marriage."

Whereas on the same issue another person from the same Chambhar community Mr. Ravi Pahade says

> "The Intercaste marriage should be happen. Because of this the caste discrimination will end." And when asked, will you be ready to marry your son or daughter in different caste? "He replied, yes, if my son or daughter marry with

> other caste I will not mind it I will support it. It's an amalgamation of two castes they come together due to which there would be the similarities in the thoughts and behaviors which can reduce or annihilate the caste system."

Another person on the same issues from the Chambhar community Mr. Omkar Pahade said:

> "There is no problem to have Intercaste marriage. My 100% support for this. But whoever is the partner he or she should be loyal to each other."

Furthermore, Mr. Namdeo Ingole from the Mang community speak on the Intercaste marriage:

> *"Ho jatichya baher pan lagna zala pahije kaun nahi zala pahije. Changlich goshta ahe na"* (yes the Intercaste marriage should happen, why not. It a very good thing). *"Jari maza lagna Jatit ahe, pan ammhi kontyahi jatit lagna karu shakto ani karayla tayar aho."* (Though my marriage is not Intercaste marriage but we can do Intercaste marriage and we are ready to do it).

Mr. Kamlesh Sahare from the Mahar community speak on Intercaste marriage:

> "It is very good, if intercaste marriages will happen then the caste system or caste based discrimination will reduced. The relations between different castes will be together, in this sense the intercaste marriage is good."

These above narrations from the Dalit communities suggest that there have been positive changes happening among the community, these changes directly challenge to the traditional way of thinking and practicing the caste based discrimination among themselves of not allowing marriages outside their caste. Nevertheless, some people from the Chambhar community still believes in the traditional understanding of caste and hence, confined marriages within their own caste. Although these caste differences is not more prevalent in their social interactions with each other but in marriage relations it has been maintained largely within Chambhar community. OBCs also feel the same as they consider themselves superior castes they do not allow the marriages outside their own castes. In the context of Intercaste relations among Dalits here Neera Burra (1986) can be true, she argued that there is the antagonistic relationship between Mahars and non-Mahar Dalits (Chambhar and Mang) in which non-Mahars have not supported the anti-caste movement

of Mahars lead by Ambedkar[13]. As a result of this antagonism there had been a differences among Dalits because of that they could not form the unity. As Sunanda Patwardhan (1968) also asserted that: "in the traditional context, a shared low ritual position and the Hindu belief and practices of pollution created a similarity of behaviour pattern amongs the former untouchables. These, however, did not mould them into a single integrated group. There is the caste endogamy and there has been no inter-dinning or inter-marriages amongs the untouchables." However, in contemporary situations from the above narrations itself, it can be argued and challenge to the Neera Burra (1986) and Sunanda Patwardhan (1968) that the majority of the Dlaits whether Chambhar, Mang or Mahar have the unity as they all say they support Intercaste marriages. Even they have said that they are ready to marry their son or daughter outside their own castes. This is the positive change have been happening among Dalits in contemporary Maharashtra which can challenge to the orthodoxy of caste discrimination among Dalits and also challenge to the dominant writing who shown the antagonism within Dalits Intercaste relations. In this direction to understand the politics behind the differences among Dalits the letter written by Ambedkar to the representative of Mang community from Marathwada region would help us. This letter has been taken from the Marathi book and translated in English it says:

"I did not understand till now what is exact allegation on me. The allegation on me by the resolution of the Mang community from the central province that I am a representative of Mahars that I red from the newspaper. I wrote about the comments of that in Janta in 4th January 1941 you must read it. I am the representative of Mahars this exclamation of congress have been continued by Mangs. At the time of Pune Pact congress was considering me as the leader of all the untouchable castes, then they reduce me to the leader of untouchables from the Mumbai Area only, then they have been calling me the leader of only Mahars. I am certain that after some days they will call me the leader of only Konkanasth Mahar. Someone try to oppose congress then you will come know the truth what I am telling you. Any leader of Chambhar should try to oppose congress the same situation you will see. If there is any Mang leader who is going to oppose congress his situation will also be same, he will remain the leader of only his own caste. I am not

[13] Burra, N. (1986). Was Ambedkar Just a Leader of Mahars? *Economic and Political Weekly* , 429-431.

surprise, somewhere the opportunity to work is enough. I am a leader not a social worker. As a leader my work is to create the peoples opinion, in this no one even my enemy will not say that I have given a place for caste discrimination. I had food in all untouchable caste's home. I supported and propagated that there should be inter-dine, Intercaste marriages among untouchables. There have been this changes among Mang-Mahar and Chambhar which is the result of my teachings this I can eventue to say. Limited to Mahars there are no resolutions have been passed through the meetings under my presidency. I had never fought the issues of Mahars only I fought for all untouchable castes."[14]

This was the claim by Ambedkar which have suggested that due to the caste politics by the congress there was a antagonism have developed among Mahar, Mang and Chambhar, however, it was also evident from the letter that there have been a changes among these communities in their inter-din and Intercaste marriages. There are some Intercaste marriages have happened in this village. According to people there are three to four Intercaste marriages have happened but not so sure between whom. Many respondents said that it's were the love marriages between Dalits and OBCs and also among Dalits. According to people the OBCs have not accepted the Intercaste marriages and as a consequences the couple had leave the village and settled in Nagpur city. Yet among Dalits the sense of Intercaste marriage have been developing and many non-Mahar caste among Dalits also been showing their interest in accepting the Ambedkarite ideology and Buddhism, which is a positive change among Dalits in contemporary Maharashtra. Similarly if we see in contemporary time the people from the same Chambhar community have been taking stand against the caste system and following the path of Ambedkar and Buddha.

As Ravi Pahade from the Chambhar community asserted that:

> "Because, the person who motivated us, given us one path and brought us in this post for that I respect Ambedkar *Sahed* (Sir with respect). He worked for the society and social change without considering his family he given his whole time to the nation and society. *Ambedkar sahebanch he samajik karyach ki tyanni aplya*

[14] This is a letter written by Ambedkar which has taken from the Marathi book "Maharashtratil Mang" and translated into English. Khabade, D. (2008). Matangancha Ambedkar Virodh. In B. C. Somvanshi, *Maharashtratil Mang* (pp. 77-78).

> *ghar cha vichar na karta purna deshacha vichar karun tyanni aplyala hya paristhitit anun basavle, he tyanche samajik karya, ani mahanun te maje rashtriya nete ase maala mhanayla harkat nahi ani ajachya kadat ase maansaa Labhat nahi.* If he would have think of himself and his own family he would have got many thing at that time but he did not do it, he think for the society first and hence I respect him."

Being Hindu from the Chambhar community he has shown his respect towards Ambedkar and follow him as his national leader is very significant change among Chambhar. However being Hindu talking about and following Ambedkar and Buddha make us little disturb hence, in order to understand his motivation towards Ambedkar and Buddha, the question have been asked to him that, you believes in Ambedkar ideology, if you get chance to embrace Buddhism from Hinduism will you do it? Replying to it he firmly asserted that:

> Yes, I will do it, currently also I am following the path of Ambedkar and Buddha. *Mag prashna fakta dharma badalnyachach ahe na te mee karel jevha vel yeil tevha.* (Then the question is just to change the religion that I will do if time will come)."

This kind of change among Chambhar witnessing the radical change among them. As they were before so antagonistic to the Mahars and Mangs and considering themselves ritually pure than other Dalit communities. Now there have been changes in themselves, they must have understood or it's a realisation that the Hindu religion have not given them anything but the same status as other Dalit communities in the society. Therefore, now they understood the importance of Ambedkar and Buddha in their life which would enlighten them from the traditional bondage of caste and give them the life of liberty, equality and fraternity. So in contemporary Maharashtra the space has created for the transition for Dalits from being Hindu to being Ambedkarite to fight against the caste system. There are some Mangs also in contemporary Maharashtra who have been accepting the philosophy of Ambedkar and Buddha and converting into Buddhism for example, Ajit Dongre from the Mang community who is also a Buddhist speak on Intercaste marriage:

> "I support Intercaste marriage, I don't follow caste system. *Jar maza mulane konti dusrya jat chi mulgi Mangitalibhi tari mee support karel* (If my son gets marry with other caste girl still I will support it)."

This kind of situation among Dalits have been suggesting that there is a gradual change among them which defined their socio-cultural relationship close to each other without discernment on the basis of caste. The Intercaste relations among Dalits cannot exclusively be understood through their political relations with each other by understanding or criticising their resentment in the political sphere or in political organisations. As (Correspondent, 1974) argued about the Dalit Panther organisation which was exclusively dominated by the Mahars, and thus, there is no basis or point to presume that when Dalit panther will become a political party it will represent Non-Mahars. Further he assert that "though the Republican Party of India (RPI) is nominally an all India political party buts its political significance is limited to Maharashtra, and that once again the party of exclusively Mahars."[15] Nevertheless, this political resentment among Dalits cannot form the basis to understand the socio-cultural relations among them. Therefore, if to understand Intercaste relations within Dalits it is more significant to closely examine their socio-cultural life. According to Ambedkar: "the social reform should preside over political reform" this view we can differently be understood as unless the socio-cultural change the political does not have much importance. The following narrations would help us in order to understand this socio-cultural life of Dalits.

In this socio-cultural life Intercaste relations has been maintain in marriage functions, every caste groups within Dalits invite each other to attain the marriages. The existence of caste discrimination here while they interact with each other in the marriage functions disappear from their mind. They do not discriminated with each other and treat each other equally. As it has been observed and said in this village that every castes within Dalits can attain the marriage functions within them. They seat together and also have food together during marriage functions. Generally it has been said and argued by some of the researcher that there were the caste base discriminations within Dalits have been practiced in the marriage functions where one caste could not attained the marriage functions of other caste people, and if they even allowed they could not inter-din together. According to (Patwardhan, 1968) she Argued: "In the traditional context, a shared low ritual position and the Hindu belief and practice of pollution created a similarity of behavioural pattern amongst

[15] (Ibid)

the former untouchables. These, however, did not mould them into a single integrated group. There is caste endogamy and there has been no inter-dining or inter-marriage amongst the untouchables."[16] This is the situation were prevailed and still it perhaps be seen in most part of India. Yet this village in this context is little different. Here we can observed the close relationship within caste groups of Dalits. In their daily or normal social and cultural life they shared the common belief and similar social status, in their marriage functions they treat each other equally and do not allow any caste differences. Even in their daily interactions they visit each other's home, talk and share foods, this is perhaps we can say the outcome of their awareness, education and the impact of Ambedkar's movement namely embracing Buddhism in 1956 at Nagpur. Although this is the small village which may not relate to the general antagonistic relationship among Dalits in rest part of the Maharashtra, nevertheless, this village may become the reference point to understand the positive socio-cultural changes among Dalits. The following narrations in this direction would help us to better understand this positive change among Dalits in their socio-cultural life.

Marriages and *Jayanties* Celebrations among Dalits

As Kamlesh Madke from the Mahar community explain about the marriage functions and other cultural celebration like *Jayanti* (Birth Anniversary) that revels some positive change among them. He says when he go to non-Mahar or other Dalit communities marriage functions:

> "Yes I attend the marriage functions of the Dalit community. They invite for the marriage functions, and we work together in the functions. We help each other for making the arrangements of the functions and any other work. We seat together, eat together in the functions. We take their help if there is a marriage function in our family they also provide a help so this exchange is continue with togetherness."

About the cultural celebrations which all Dalit community celebrates in the village, he says:

[16] Patwardhan, S. (1968). Social Mobility and Conversion of Mahars. *Sociological Bulletin, 17*, 187-202.

> "14th April Ambedkar *Jayanti* (Anniversary), Buddha Jayanti, Anna Bhau sathe jayanti and Hanuman Jayanti are celebrated in the village. We go to the celebration of the Anna Bhau Sathe Jayanti and Rohidas Jayanti. They also come to Ambedkar Jayanti we work together for the celebration of these Jayantis. There is no discrimination in it."

How all these cultural functions celebrated, he says:

> "It should be celebrated together, but we go through the laws of Ambedkar, we don't celebrated the 36 crore gods and goddess. It just we are living in the village so we have to be present in their Hindu festival celebration otherwise we celebrate the *Dashara* on 14th October as a *Dharmantar Din* (Religious Conversion Day) and then 14th April and Buddha Jayanti. And we also show the interest in celebrating the Anna Bahu Sathe Jayanti and the Rohidas Jayanti, but the Chambhar itself don't come forward in celebrating the Rohidas Jayanti they themselves do not take initiative in celebrating the Jayanti hence, sometime only it is celebrated."

Other person Mr. Upasrao Madke from the Mahar community explain about the same, he says

> "I go to other community's marriage functions, we seat together and inter-dine together. There is no discrimination in it everyone live together. All functions we have to celebrate, like Buddha Jayanti, all programmes *Jordar Sajare Karto* (we celebrate it massively). We are celebrating it good, it should be celebrated nicely by all the castes, *ani Shobha Vadhavli Pahije Programchi* (have to increase the decorum of functions)."

Another person Deepak Sahare from the Mahar community speaking on the same, he says:

> "Yes of course I go, they also invite me. I go and also do some sort of help in organizing the marriage function, I can serve food also to the guest who came for the marriage function. It's anyone whether it is Chambhar, Mang, Dhor, Mahar or any caste I attaint the marriage functions."

These are the Mahar community who shared their views on the socio-cultural relationship among Dalits. This can be understand from above narrations that how the Intercaste

relations have been maintain by them as they attain the marriage functions of other Dalit communities and participate in its rituals and celebrates different cultural programmes. Namely Ambedkar and Buddha Jayanti and also show their interest in Celebrating Anna Bhau Sathe Jayanti as paying tribute to them for their work in the society to fight against the exploitative system. In Maharashtra Mahars are the one who are socially and politically aware and have been fighting against the exploitative caste system of which entire Dalit community is victim in the hands of upper caste. There are some political differences in them which we will discuss latter, but in social they have been carrying the legacy of Phule and Ambedkar to fight against the social evils that is the caste system. They barrow this tradition largely from Ambedkar who taught them the life of dignity and self-respect and at the end have given them the very important *Dhamma* (Path) of Buddhism by embracing it in 1956 at Nagpur. The Mahars who were in the majority have accepted the Buddhism on the call of Ambedkar in 1956, since then this Mahar community have been called as "Mahar Buddhist or Neo-Buddhist."[17] They do not believe in celebrating Hindu gods and Goddess as they go with the law of Ambedkar as said by one of the respondents, however, as they lives in one village and OBCs also come to their celebration of Ambedkar and other *jayanties* hence, Dalits also have to go for their cultural celebration of hanuman Jayanti. They go in Hanuman Jayanti just to see it and not to follow it completely. So the stand of Mahars is clear here, they believes in unity among Mahar, Mang and Chambhar and also show their socio-cultural proximity with other Dalit communities. Therefore, studying only their views on socio-cultural relationship and how this Intercaste relations have been maintain among them and other Dalits will not satisfied the objectives of this study unless we examine what other Dalit communities like Chambhar and Mang have to say in this direction. So let's examine what Chambhar and Mangs have to say about this relationship.

Ravi Pahade from the Chambhar community explaining about the Intercaste marriage relations and other cultural celebration among Dalits:

> "Yes we go to marriage functions of non-Chambhar community, they invite us, and there is no problem at all among the Dalits we live like one. Even the OBC; invite us in the marriage function, in the paste that discrimination was there, but

[17] Mahar Buddhist also been called as Neo Buddhist. These name have given to the Mahar Communities of Maharashtra who have embrace Buddhism with their leader Ambedkar in 956 in Nagpur.

> now it's not, we also assert that if you are ready to seat with us together and inter-dine with us then only we come to your marriage functions otherwise we are not interested to come."

About other cultural functions and celebrations in the village he says:

> "Every programme, like the marriage party, and then Ambedkar Jayanti and Buddha Jayanti programme all this public function we together come and celebrate. We do not celebrate Rohidas Jayanti in the village, this is the problem with my own community (Chambhar) itself that they are not organized in them and hence they don't celebrate it."

Person (Omkar Pahade) from the Chambhar community says on the same issue:

> "Yes we attend the marriage functions of other caste people they also come to our function and we help each other during marriage function. "*Amhhi sobatach bastopan jevayla lagnat, ithe asa nahi ahe ki to dusrya jaticha ahe tar alag basnar. Ammhi sobat ekatra eka line madhe jevto asa jati bhedbhav nahi ahe amchyat.*" (We seat together for inter-dine in marriage, here it's not like if he is from different caste so will seat separate. We all together seat in one line for dining there is no such caste discrimination among us).

Talking on other cultural celebration he says:

> "See we are Chambhar but we do not celebrate Rohidas Jayanti here in the village, it has been celebrated in some other parts. Then like the SC Community or Mahar community we all together celebrate Ambedkar Jayanti or Buddha Jayanti." When asked why you not celebrate Rohidas Jayanti? He replied: "No, we do not celebrate Rohidas Jayanti this is not the question, the question is no one has taken an initiative to celebrate it since before there is no initiative from our community to celebrate it."

This kind of situation in this village revels the best relationship among Dalits. From this it can be understood that there are not a caste based confines and prejudices of caste discrimination among Mahar Mang and Chambhar for each other. Having shared their socio-cultural affinities for each other, visiting each other house for general meetings and

as a part of daily relations without the caste differences and giving equal treatment for each other is a significant sing of the positive change among Dalits in contemporary time.

The person Namdeo Ingole from the Mang community explained on the same marriage function and other cultural celebrations:

> *"ho sarva Paan supari sarva eksath hote.. Te lok pan manane bolavtat lagnala. Sarva basun eksath jevto lagnat. Te log pan adarane bolavtat tyat kahi vad nahi ahe."* (Yes all *paan-supari* (marriage culture) we do it together. They also invite us with respect, we all inter-dine together in the marriage and they invite us with respect there is no question about it).

On other cultural celebrations he says:

> "Ambedkar Jayanti, Buddha Jayanti, Anna Bahu Sathe Jayanti, and Ganesh Jayanti all together we celebrate. *Sarvanni eksath yeun sajri karav hee mazee maat ahe*." (Everyone should come and celebrate it this is my opinion).

Another person (Ajay Dongre) from Mang community he explained on the same issue:

> "Yes I go to other caste people's marriage functions. They also invite us with respect. We all seat together in the marriage functions there is no differences on the basis of caste. Everyone seat and inter-dine together."

About other cultural celebration he says:

> "Ambedkar Jayanti, Buddha Jayanti, and any other function we celebrate together. Everyone should come together and celebrate. There should not be differences on caste *Sarvanna Saman vagnun rahili pahije"* (Everyone should have equal treatment)."

From this above narrations of Chambhar and Mang community, it can be argued that there is some assertion in this community that they challenged the upper caste hegemony of caste system. And as they do not believe in this traditional and dominating system of caste they do not allow the same within Dalits or in their own community. As one person from Chambhar community explained about caste discrimination in marriage functions and asserted or revolted: "if you are ready to seat with us together and inter-dine with us then only we come to your marriage functions otherwise we are not interested to come." This

kind of assertion within Dalits challenge to the traditional way of thinking and also challenge to the person or community who practice caste based discriminations. The OBCs at large practice caste base discriminations on Dalits, however in this village the picture is little different, as there is a unity of Mahar, Mang and Chambhar in this village and population wise also they are in majority therefore, the domination of OBCs on Dalit is not here. This assertion largely reflected against the OBC's who do not dare to exploit Dalits on the caste line. As a result they (OBCs) also invite Dalits in their Marriage functions. Then talking about the cultural Jayanti celebration it is clear that all Dalit communities whether Mahar, Chambhar or Mang they massively celebrate the Ambedkar Jayanti and Buddha Jayanti together. They also together celebrate Anna Bhau Sathe Jayanti as remembering Anna Bhau Sathe for his contribution to aware his community and fight against the exploitative system of caste. About the celebration of Rohidas Jayanti the people within Dalits like Mahars and Mangs show their interest but the Chambhar community itself doesn't come out to celebrate it. As Ravi Pahade from Chambhar community says: "No we do not celebrate Rohidas Jayanti in the village, this is the problem with my own community (Chambhar) itself that they are not organized in them and hence they don't celebrate it." This particular problem is within the Chambhar community that they are not aware about their religious leader and his contribution for the society. They might be not so assertive towards their leader socially and politically therefore, celebrating Rohidas Jayanti may not have much importance in this village as Chambhars itself are not interested in it.

However, celebrating Annabhau Sathe Jayanti by Mangs and the support from Mahars and Chambhars to celebrate it has an importance as they all remember Annabhau Sathe for his contribution in Dalit movements to fight against the caste system. Whereas Ambedkar Jayanti and Buddha Jayanti have much significance in the life of all the Dalits. As a constitution maker, removing all the Dalits from the bondage of traditional caste system and giving them the dignified life, as a social reformer and leader of modern India all the Dalits remember him and follow his ideology. This can be seen from the narrations of all the participants that they are more inclined towards celebrating Ambedkar Jayanti. Hence,

in this direction we have been seen the generosity among all the Dalits whether Mahar, Mang or Chambhar to celebrate the Ambedkar Jayanti at massive level in this village. So these Intercaste relations among Dalits in this village have been closely maintained. They respect each other, go to each other's functions and celebrate different cultural programmes together without any caste boundaries or caste discrimination within them.

This kind of assertion shows that after the 69 years of independence and access to education Dalits in contemporary Maharashtra are more aware. Historically it is only Mahars within Dalits who have been challenged the dominating caste structure but it's now Chambhars and Mangs in contemporary Maharashtra who also have been participating to challenge against the traditional caste rules. In this direction study by (Waghmore, 2002) reveals the relationship between Mahars and Mangs in which Mang community asserts through the Ambedkar ideology in fighting against the social evils of caste to which Mahars also supported them. Here we would argued that the dominating socio-cultural relations among Dalits which were prevailed long time ago as discussed by (Kachole, 2008) who give the historical overview of these communities suggest that "history of inter-caste relations among Dalits is dominated by Chambhars and Mahars". However in current situations as it is evident from the above narrations from Mahar, Mang and Chambhar advocate that they in contemporary time lives in the close proximity with each other, in turn it has formed the unity of caste within them. They participate in every socio-cultural programmes together and in their daily interactions they visits to each other's homes even in the marriage functions they treat each other equally. Most importantly there is no such caste boundaries among them to do Intercaste marriages.

b) Economic Relations

The Dalits are largely the landless community in Maharashtra and very few among them are the marginal farmers having on an average two or three acres of land on which they hardly meet their substantial needs. In this village also situation is more or less same.

Following table will illustrate the land distribution pattern and occupation of Dalits

Caste	Name of the Person	Land Own	Cattle Own	Other Occupation	Irrigation Facilities
Mahar	Kamlakar Madke	2 acer	2 Bull, 1 Cow and 4 Goat	Wage Labour	One well
	Upasrao Madke	3.5 acer	2 Bull and 3 Goat	Wage Labour	One well
	Deepak Sahare	Landless	No cattle	Xerox Center and Upsarpanch	NA
Chambhar	Govinda Pahade	1 acer	3 sheep	Shoe Shop	One well
	Omkar Pahade	2 acer	3 cow	Furniture work	No
	Rameshwar Pahade	2 acer	2 Bull and 3 Goat	Labour work	No
Mang	Raghunath Ingole	Landless	No cattle	Traditional work	NA
	Parakhchand Dongre	Landless	No cattle	Agriculture Labour	NA

(Source: Empirical data collected from the field by the researcher in Temburdoh village of Saoner block of Nagpur District.)

From the above table one can understand the economic situation of each caste among Dalits. For this study nine sample size have been selected which have illustrated the overall picture of the economic condition of Dalits in this village. If we analyse above table it has shown that the economic condition of Mahars and Chambhars are more or less same than the Mang. It suggested that the average land ownership of Mahar and Chambhar in this village is the same. They also have the significant numbers of cattle that makes them more economically empower than the Mang community who are landless. It has also shown that the participation of Mahars in politics is significant as one of them is an *upsarpanch* of the village who always fight for the political representation of their community. From the table it can be illustrate that the Mahar and Chambhar in this village share similar economic

position. Whereas The Mang community who did not have land and largely been remained in their traditional occupation are economically backward than the Mahar and Chambhar. Their lack of political movement and no proper representation have made them backward economically and socially. Above table illustrate the same picture that they do not have land and remain in their traditional work. However, it is been observed while studying them that there has been a positive change among the Mang. They now criticize about their traditional occupation and focus on good educational opportunities for their better future. For example, Parakhchand Dongre he criticizes the traditional occupation and give more emphasize and importance to education, he says:

> "Traditional occupation is not necessary we can do any work. *Mulat Paaramparik vevsay kelach nahi pahije* (Fundamentally traditional occupation should not be practice)." Apla paramparrik vevsay sodala pahije, ani changli mehanat karun samor gele pahije busuness kela pahije ani Education ghetla pahije. Band Baja gheun konachya lagnat vajavne he aplyala pasand nahi."

We got the overall picture of economic condition of Dalit communities in this village. Now discuss on their economic relations with each other to analyse their caste differences and unity of caste in their economic activities with each other. As socially and politically aware Mahar community have left their traditional occupation long year back and now concentrate on good education and new employment opportunities. Some Chambhars who have been continue with their traditional occupations in the village but also looking forward for education and other employment opportunity. Similarly the Mang community in the village at large have still continue with their traditional occupations due to their socio-economic backwardness. This backwardness have resulted from the upper caste exploitative caste system where these people have largely been used for the political benefit of upper caste especially the congress have used them against other Dalit communities historically (Khabde, 2008). Hence, making Mahars and Chambhars responsible for the socio-economic backwardness of Mangs may not be acceptable in current situations. However, this situation have been changing over a period of time among Mang and now they also like Mahars and Chambhars looking forward the good educational and employment opportunities. Thus, it is significant to know about their economic relations with each other in contemporary Maharashtra, which have explored their economic

Intercaste relations with each other that have shown a significant positive change among them. Reflecting on their caste based traditional occupation they highly criticised it and also seen new opportunities in front of them. In their daily interactions and need, they give an economic support to each other when there is a financial need or problem among them. In response to this, one of the Mahars from Dalits says:

> "Before Dalits were working a very dirty work, they used to remove the dead animals carcasses, manual scavenging, leather work and so. Now this situation has little change due to Ambedkar. But still in our village Mangs are doing their traditional occupation of playing drum in the weddings or the death ceremony of the people in the village and also making broom. Mahars have totally left their traditional occupation now they do farming or go to other daily wage labour work. Chambhars also have left their traditional occupation only one Chambhar family is doing its traditional occupation of selling boot and Sleepers in our village. I think they should not do their traditional occupation but those do not have land and are illiterate their livelihood is depend on it what can they do."

Further explaining about the financial transactions or financial relations between him and other Dalit community like Mang and Chambhar said:

> "Yes, there are a financial transactions between us. If anyone need the money we take it from each other there is no problem in it."

On the same issue, the young person from the Chambhar community says:

> "I have not think of that and never give attention to that occupation. My grandfather would have done traditional occupation but my father did not do hence I also did not go for that occupation. I do not know whether that occupation is good or bad, but if there are other business options are available so why should to think of that occupation. Now I am doing my furniture Business work in which I am so happy." Further explain about the financial transaction between them and other Dalits he says: "We do financial transactions with them. *Jaar konala avashakta padali paishachi tar te yetat amchakade amhi paan joto tyancha kade jaar ammhala jarurat padali taar, arthik madat ammhi ekmekanha karto* (When anyone need money they come to us, we also go to them if we need money, we

support or help each other economically). There is no differences or discrimination in it on the caste basis."

A person (Namdeo Ingole) from Mang community who is engaging with the traditional occupation as he do not have land and because of illiteracy he even do not know some other work. It is his compulsion that he has to do this traditional work of beating drum in the marriage and death ceremonies of the people and also making broom says:

> "*Ammhi garib mansa, hatvar anto ani panavar khato. Mazakade jamin nahi, ani dusra dhanda mala yet nahi, mag hach dhanda maza roji rotti ahe* (I do not have land, and I do not know other work, then this traditional occupation is the only resource for my livelihood or my labour and butter). Further about the financial transaction he explained: *"Nahi aapan konale paise usne Mangat nahi ani koni ammhale det pan nahi* (No we do not ask for money on loan to anyone and no one give it to us) *Karan* (Because) *te samjtat he garib Mangache lok kay paise parat denar* (They think that this poor Mang people cannot pay it back). *Mhanun amhhi apla kamoto 100 kinha 200 rupae ani jagto* (Hence we earn our own 100 or 200 rupees and live our life).

It shows that how the poor economic condition and illiterateness forced the particular community to continue with their inhuman traditional occupation. As one of the Mahars have said on this issue that: "I think people should not do their traditional occupation but those who do not have land and are illiterate, their livelihood is depend on it, what can they do." This statement from the Mahar proves that the relationship between Mahars and Mang have certain significance where Mahar showing their concern for the Mangs, rather condemning them as they are engaging with the caste based traditional occupation. Though from above narration the Mang could not barrow money from anyone and no other people give them money seeing their worse economic condition unable them to pay it back. However, other Dalits could not see them as separate and do not discriminate with them. They treat them equally and also invite them in any socio-cultural functions. This shows the unity of caste which has been reflected from

The economic relations among Mahar, Mang and Chambhar have closely been observed in this village. Though there is no literature available on the economic relations among Mahar, Mang and Chambhar but from the field observations and narrations it can be said

that in their daily life if anybody in the emergency situations need any financial help they do help each other. They can borrow money from each other whenever there is need, it's not like if they belongs to different caste groups within Dalits will not help each other, anyone can go to each other's home and ask for the money there are not any caste boundaries in it. This financial help is so different than the landlord who gave money to individuals and then exploits them. Here when they take money from each other they have trust within them. This economic relations have been maintained within them and also apart from their traditional occupations they now concentrate on educations, government job and other business opportunities. As explained by

> "Financial transaction is going on among us, if we need any financial help they give us and if they need we also give them, there is no problems in it." Explaining about the traditional occupation he said: "Because of the agriculture work the traditional occupation have become side-line. Now I just brought the readymade stuffs like, Rubber/Plastic Sleeper and Shoes and sale it in this small shop as my side business. I am satisfied with my occupation as I earn some money out of it. *Paan parramparik vivsayala jasta mahtva na deta apan education kade vadale pahije ani uccha padavar gelo pahije* (we should not give more importance to traditional occupation and should focus on education to achieve a higher post)."

Further explaining on the traditional occupation and giving the importance of education and other businesses Deepak Sahare from Mahar community says:

> "As our forefathers were doing the traditional occupation, they were poor in thinking and lack the representation, today we are aware of education, we have media we understand the location so we need to go into the development and establish the business. As our people are poor socially and economically, largely doing the agriculture work, they need to go to the politics and any small businesses so that they could do something. See the irony Chambhar are removing animal flesh hence they are conceder as low caste and the Brahmins having big factories of leather like the "Bata Shop" they are above all, this is something immoral. Today the Brahmin having the leather factories and selling their branded products in the market in a high price than a sleeper or shoes made by Chambhar. So to remove this difference or inequality Chambhar can also set their business or factory, the

government should form the groups of Chambhar and help them to establish their business."

Without giving importance to the caste, Mahar, Mang and Chambhar shown their integrity and closeness in their economic relations, it has been reflected from their economic relations with each other where they help each other in the emergency need of the money. Whenever there is need of money any caste group within Dalits can go to other caste home and ask or request for the money. This close relationship they have developed in contemporary Maharashtra. Speaking on behalf of other Dalit communities, extending concern for eachother also be a good sign in them. Due to the caste hierarchy in the society Dalits as a whole have been subjugated from the economic opportunities and assign much degraded jobs to them. As a result of it they had to suffer from the social stigma and economic deprivation. They had their own traditional occupation which has been considered as dirty work with social stigma attached to them. With the passage of time and gradual awareness among them due to active Dalit movement in Maharashtra and educational opportunities available through reservation Mahars at the first have left their traditional occupation and concentrate on education and other employment opportunities available. Chambhar who were doing their traditional leather business work were economically well comparatively Mahars and Mangs, as leather have more economic value in the market. Nevertheless, this business still attached to particular caste and has a social stigma attached with it, because of this many Chambhar have left their traditional work. However, some Chambhar still continue with it by asserting that how can this occupation be polluting as many upper caste people also do the same business e.g. Bata who has huge leather shoe market which generate more economy. This is so ironical where if any poor Chambhar community doing the leather business consider as polluting and degraded whereas the upper caste community who do the same leather work by processing it and making a final product consider as big business man. Making comments on the similar note, one of the participants from the Mahar community speak for the Chambhar, he says "See the irony Chambhar are removing animal flesh hence, they are conceder as low caste and the Brahmins having big factories of leather like the "Bata Shop" they are above all, this is something immoral. Today the Brahmin having the leather factories and selling their branded products in the market in a high price than a sleeper or shoes made by Chambhar.

So to remove this difference or inequality Chambhar can also set their business or factory, the government should form the groups of Chambhar and help them to establish their business." This concern of Mahar community for the Chambhar reflects their close relations with Chambhar which cannot be neglected.

Mang community are still economically backward within Dalits. I shall not say they are socially backward within Dalits, as all Dalits are socially backward in relation to other upper castes like Brahmins and OBCs. So majoring social backwardness of Mangs within Dalits is little challenging, as we have studied in socio-cultural relations among Mahar, Mang and Chambhar that have shown the close proximity within them. But, in terms of economic comparison they are till bellow the Mahar and Chambhar as they are landless and are largely engaging with their traditional occupation[18] of playing Drum and other musical instrument in Marriage functions for their livelihood which could not generate much economy for them. Knowing the fact about Mangs still the response of Mahars and Chambhar community towards Mang is positive, they have not thrown Mang community separate but accepted in every corner and think for their economic development. As one of the participants Deepak Sahare says: "I want the Mang community should take good education, leave their traditional occupation and go for good job opportunity. I am ready to help their children educationally but just they show some seriousness for it." This reflections have proved that within Dalit communities the Mahar and Chambhar have concern for Mangs despite they are economically poor than Mahar and Chambhar. This economic Intercaste relations among Dalits were limited to their access to economic needs from each other, and the opinion on their traditional occupations to see how they interact with each other to for a caste unity. Further we will discuss about political relation among Dalits to see this caste unity prevails there or not.

[18] Though Mangs traditional occupation of playing drums and other musical instrument have been attached with the social stigma and humiliating throughout history, it has taken some modern form (like DJ, Musical programmes etc.) in contemporary situation in which not only Mang community but other communities also engages to generate economy. This kind of shift in the traditional occupations of particular community suggest further probe and research.

c) Political Relations

If we historically see the political relations among Dalits, it have shown us a very divergent and dynamic relations in Maharashtra. Ambedkar being the leader of marginalized communities like Dalits have fought against the injustice and domination from the society. He represented Dalits in the state and assembly and drafting the Indian constitution he given Dalits certain rights to uplift them socio-economically and politically. However, Neere Burra (1986), in her work *Is Ambedkar just a leader of Mahar?* Concluded that, Ambedkar as being a Mahar have only work for the Mahars. The proportionate share of all the facilities in the state should have gone to all castes within Dalits, but only the Mahars who have dominated on it. And hence, other caste within Dalits, especially Chambhar and Mang have not supported the Ambedkar in his movement. This were the antagonistic political relation we could find within Dalits during Ambedkar period. Then post Ambedkar political relations among Dalits, say it is from the 1970s of the Dalit Panther movement and the formation of Republican Party of India (RPI). Both have stood against the dominating social structure and the state, where the Dalit panther movement were leading the anti-caste movement and resisting against the atrocities committed on the Dalits by upper caste Hindus and Brahmins at large. Whereas the RPI as a political party tried to consolidate itself in the larger political domain to represent Dalits as a whole in the society.

However, at the same time both in Dalit Panther and in RPI there were internal differences on the basis of ideology and caste within Dalits, which have shaped both the movements in different fractions that have largely been dominated by Mahars in which the representation of other castes like Chambhar and Mang remain untouched[19]. Hence, these Chambhars and Mangs perhaps tried themselves to distinguish from this political movement (Correspondent S. , 1947). On a same note in contemporary Maharashtra how Dalits should shape their political relations with each other is the larger question. Before making any comments on the political relationship among Dalits in contemporary

[19] Corresponden, S. (1947). Dalit Pather: Anothe Overview . *Economic and Political Weekly* , 715-716.

Maharashtra let's examine certain responses from Dalits which have been collected from filed recently.

Mr Kamlakar Madke from the Mahar community when asked about which political party he support and way and also what political changes he see among Dalits? In reply to this question he says:

> "We support BSP and RPI, *Aamche rajkiya nete Ambedkar, Kanshiram, Mayawati ani Prakash Ambedkar hee ahet.* (Our political leaders are Ambedkar, Kanshiram, Mayawati ani Prakash Ambedkar). karan DR. Babasahed Ambedkar yancha nusar ani tyancha vichardhare nusar BSP ani RPI hech amchi party ahet jee amcha netrutva karushaktat manun amcha support hya partinna aahe (Because according to Dr. Babasahed Ambedkar and his ideology BSP and RPI are our political party which can represent us and hence we support these parties).

Further explaining about the political changes he says:

> "Without education there will be no change, if we will take the education we can understand the Ambedkar and his mission. Education is the only key to bring the positive change."

On the same note another person from the Mahar community Mr. Upasrao Madke says:

> "I support the Congress party, because voting to congress is going on from my parents hence I support it. *Maze political leader Sunil Kedar* (A local MP from the Congress) *ani Kanshiramji pan changale nete hote.* (My political leader is Sunil Kedar, Kanshiram also was a good leader)"

Another person from the Mahar community who is the voice Sarpanch of the village Deepak Sahare says on the same issue:

> "I support the congress party, because I Like the local Leader of that party as he reached to the common people so my relation is with that leader, I don't have any relation with the party but with our leader who listen to the people and work for them. In current my leader are Rahul Gandhi**,** Manmohan Singh**,** in past Ambedkar, GadgeMaharaj, Tukdoji Maharaj, Mahatma Phule"

Explaining on the political changes he says:

> "Main point is education, I feel that all the Mang, Mahar and Chambhar should take good education and become a collector and higher the big posts. In business sector government should support them, if Chambhar doing the leather work the government should help them to establish his own business and factory. And also not just focusing and giving the chocolate of any scheme like Gharkul scheme they should also help them financially to set the business of their choice and make available the market for their products this is what I feel."

A person from Chambhar community Mr. Govinda Pahade on the same issues he says:

> "No the political party I do not understand, I just like the person who are there contesting election, *maag to kontyapan political partycha aso,* (then he is from any political party) if his nature, work and values I like then only I support that particular person, not as a party but as a person."

About further political changes among Dalits he says:

> "I don't think about any changes between us now, because now we all live together with *Bandhubhav*, we don't discriminate with them they don't discriminate with us we live in close relationship with each other then again what change we want. About national leader, I have not think in that direction. As I belong to small village I have not gone further it. Now seating in this village I did not think of Mumbai."

Replying on the same issue of politics and further changes Ajay Dongre from Mang community says:

> I do not have as such political party. I don't vote according to party I just vote for the person. *Apli ji political party ahe BSP paan te yetach nahi ticha astitvach disat nahi taar kaay karnar."* (Our political party is BSP but it doesn't come, it does not have existence then what we can do).

From the above narration it can be argued that the political relations among Dalits are dynamics. Although they live in the close proximity with each other in their social and economic life but in the political relations they differ. As it has been observed from the narrations that majority of Dalits are supporting congress and the reason for their support to congress is the local leader (Sunil Kedar) from the party who reached to the people at the grass root and understand their problems. However, the same congress which have done

historical wrong with the large Dalit communities, Ambedkar himself was the victim of their larger political strategy who says: “The only difference between the congress and the Hindu Maha Sabha is that the latter is crude in its utterances and brutal in its actions while the congress is politic and polite. Apart from this difference of fact, there is no other difference between the congress and the Hindu Maha Sabha."[20] This politics and political reality somewhere many of Dalits do not know except few Mahars in Maharashtra hence, they may blindly support to the congress.

If we carefully analyse the narrations in this study it suggested that Mangs and Chambhars Though believes on Ambedkar and follow his ideology but not necessarily support existing Ambedkarite political parties like RPI (Republican Party of India) and BSP (Bahujan Samaj Party) which has its own fractions. Now in this case it become very interesting that whether these so called Ambedkarite political parties itself serve the very purpose of Ambedkar or not. As one of the participants says: *Apli ji political party ahe BSP paan te yetach nahi ticha astitvach disat nahi taar kaay karnar.”* (Our political party is BSP but it doesn’t come, it does not have any existence then what we can do). This suggest us that despite having Dalit political party it does not serve the purpose, though it may have its own limitations.

It also follow the sense that it is not whether they follow the Ambedkarite political parties, but in the larger political domain they might not find the good political leader from this Ambedkarite political parties which itself has some internal fight. So to meet the larger people interest they go with other political parties, it is not because of the particular party but the leader who serves them in the grassroots. Here we may conclude that despite having unity of caste in socio and economic life among Dalits in contemporary Maharashtra there are little differences in the political mobilisation of Dalits within themselves. This difference of political mobilisation among Mahar, Mang and Chambhar may not be the result of their differences with Ambedkar and his movement as Neera Burra have asserted. But it may be because the domination of upper caste people on the larger political domain

[20] Baba Sahib’s Quotable Quotes, *Ambedkar Chair Department of Economics & Rural Development.* Dr. R M L Avadh University, Faizabad.

which did not allow the Dalits politic should flourished, and as a result whole political movement got supressed and co-opted by the mainstream political parties.

On other political changes among Dalits all the responses came from them focussed on the education. Educations is the only means through which all the changes are possible among Dalits, this is the awareness Dalits are having which give more importance to education rather any traditional system. It believes the education would bring further positive changes among Dalits. The larger question is does this education also contribute for the Dalits political mobilization as a whole. The political mobilization of Dalits would be possible, according to (Wankhede, 2008) if they (Largely Mang and Chambhar) would "read Ambedkar's ample writings" to understand the larger politics of upper caste or dominant social system.

Why Dalits in their political relations have not come under one umbrella and why they at large did not support their own parties remain the larger question. In this direction weather the Dalit political parties itself which remain fighting in themselves and searching for the consolidation by other mainstream parties for their own benefit is responsible or the dominant social structure itself which does not allow Dalit political mobilization and largely suppressed it from insight-out is responsible need the further probe and investigation by the researcher.

Chapter 4

CONCLUSION

4.1 CASTE AMONG DALITS: A CHANGING DISCOURSE

The word Dalit got the popularisation during 1970s in Dalit Panther movement. "This word is chosen by the Mahar community leaders themselves to replace the titles of "untouchables" "Backward" and "Harijan" coined by those outside the Dalit community to describe Mahar, Mang and Chambhar castes."[21] Dalits describe those whose social and cultural life have been dehumanise, broken and crushed to pieces by the dominant Hindu culture and its Varna system (Constable, 1997). This Varna system based on the hierarchy is the driving force of discrimination with Dalits as a whole (including Mahar, Mang and Chambhar) in which they have to suffer from extreme dehumanisation, discrimination and violence by the upper caste. The entire Dalit community is the victim of this Hindu culture and its hierarchical social order. Yet, the hierarchy among Dalits has been contested by its members itself in the contemporary Maharashtra. The very tradition of the Hindu culture and its caste discriminative approach have been challenged by the Mahar, Mang and Chambhar where they shares the common values and non-discriminative attitude among themselves by asserting through the Ambedkarite and Buddhist ideology.

Intercaste relations among Dalits in Rural Maharashtra have suggested these changes where Mahar, Mang and Chambhar lives in the close proximity with each other in their socio-cultural and economic life. It has challenged the previous claims by Neera burra (1986) and Sunanda Patwardhan (1968) who asserted that: "among Dalits, the Ambedkar only supported the Mahars and because of him only the Mahars have got the disproportionate share of benefit, which should have gone to all the Dalits, and hence, the other castes especially the Chambhar and Mang have not supported the Ambedkar and talk against him" and "Cluster of caste groups among Dalits shares the certain identity in having belonged in the past to the polluting castes and in possessing cultural affinities and a

[21] Constable, P. (1997). Early Dalit Literature and Culture in Late Nineteenth- and Early Twentieth-Century Western India. *Modern Asian Studie, Vol. 31*, 317-338.

general historical background. Above all, they have a bond that has been made strong by experiencing similar ritual, economic and socio-political deprivations. A shared low ritual position and similar social experience have not however, brought about uniformity in mobility and movement" respectively. Yet, here in contemporary Maharashtra the situation have been changing over a period of time where the Mahar, Mang and Chambhar form the unity of castes in themselves and shared the common belief based on the moral principles. These changes have been witnessed from their socio-cultural functions and different Jayanti celebrations which have become a site for them to come together. For example, there in marriage functions they can go to each other's marriages, they invite each other with the same respect, where they seat together and also inter-din together, there is no differences of caste in their treatment for each other. Also during Jayanti celebrations they come forward to help each other, when Mahars take initiative to celebrate Ambedkar Jayanti and Buddha Jayanti they invite Mangs and Chambhars, who also take participation in celebrating the Jayanti, where they contribute money, make arrangement for the programmes together and also organise the cultural event where Ambedkar and Buddha's songs been played. The food also been distributed during the programmes where they inter-din together. Same with the Annabhau Sathe Jayanti celebration, as Annabhau Sathe belongs to the Mang community he also been celebrated among Mahars. Annabhau Sathe as being Mang have fought against the caste system and then at last accepted the ideology of Ambedkar, so celebrating his Jayanti is the significant sign to show the caste unity among Dalits. During his Jayanti same cultural programmes have been organised where all Mahar, Mang and Chambhar participate and contribute their work or effort to make this programme successful. Talking about Rohidas Jayanti celebration in this village, the Chambhar community itself do not come up to celebrate it as according to themselves the Chambhar community is not organise and they do not take initiative to celebrate it. This is the problem in their own self and they have accepted their problem which does not have much baring on the Intercaste relations among Dalits as Mahar and Mang have shown their interest to celebrate the same. This socio-cultural affinities among Dalits have witnessed the unity of castes among Dalits in contemporary Maharashtra. This affinities among Dalits have been proven right by the study in same direction in Marathwada region by (Waghmore, 2013), which revels the Mang's mobilization and assertion through their

Ambedkarite and Buddhist identity and fight against the caste discrimination and human right violation of Dalits in Beed district, for which Mahars also supported. These Mahar, Mang and Chambhar mobilisation in contemporary Maharashtra have challenged the existing understanding and knowledge about Dalits that merely reflected the differences and antagonism of Intercaste relations among them.

4.2 DYNAMICS OF CASTE RELATIONS AMONG DALITS

Field work done by researcher in Saoner block of Nagpur district observed that Mahars and Chambhars are economically well within Dalit community and also identified with their socio-cultural unity. The Mang from Marathwada regions they also benefited by Ambedkarite movement and also enjoying economic status because of welfare policies implemented and the constitution measures (Waghmore, 2013). However, the extent of Mang community to achieve this economic status is very low, as identified in the research area still the Mang community lack the access to land and due to low educational attainment and landlessness they choose to go with their traditional occupation. Yet this situation also been changing over a period of time among Mang where despite not having land, they refuse to do their caste based traditional occupation and more concentrate on educational opportunities. It is also been observed in them that they are largely following the path of Ambedkar and also converting into Buddhism which is the positive sign to form the caste unity and development among Dalits.

The dynamic relationship of castes among Dalits have largely been observed in their political relations. Historically if we see during Ambedkar period the dynamics of caste relations among Mahar, Mang and Chambhar had played an important role. As that time politics played by congress was crucial one to divide Dalits as a whole where at the Round Table Conferences Ambedkar have been praise by congress as a leader of all the untouchables or Dalits in India, on the other hand they gradually reduce him to the leader of only Mahars for their own political benefits (Khabde, in *Maharashtratil Mang*, Somvanshi, 2008). This situation has resulted into some resentment among Chambhar and Mang against the Mahars by praising Ambedkar only the leader of Mahars as discussed by Neera Burra (1986). Then post Ambedkar, during 1970s Dalit Panther movement, Dalits have organized themselves to fight against the caste atrocities against their fellow people,

this movement have left many positive impact to understand the caste violence against Dalits as a whole. Nevertheless it was also largely dominated by Mahars which later come out with different fractions in many ideological camps. Same happen with the Republican Party of India (RPI) which has consolidated some of the fractions of Dalit panther in to its larger political domain, and some of the fractions have joined the hands with congress and BJP. Mangs and Chambhars largely remained outside the purview of RPI and the Mahars who only dominated in the party. In later period RPI also been coopted by the mainstream political parties like Congress and BJP where hope for proper representation of Dalits disappeared.

The antagonism among Dalits spread by Hindu political group like BJP and Congress resulted into resentment of Mahar, Mang and Chambhar relationship in its political sphere where they have large differences. However, in the larger political context this anonymity and resentment blanketed by political movement bring by Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) where the Bahujan as an identity help Dalit to unite since its inception from leadership like Kanshiram from 1989. In Maharashtra BSP for Dalit identified as alternative political group and differences like Mang, Chambhar and Mahars strictly disappears and collectivity starts fighting against dominant Hindu structure (Waghmore, 2013). Yet, the Intercaste relations among Dalits revels the political instability among Dalits. And this political instability have been resulted from the instability in its own Ambedkarite political parties who failed to consolidate the large Dalit community in its political agenda and demean the name of Ambedkar itself in its political domain. Hence, It has argued that majority of Dalits including some Mahars have been supporting congress party though they have claimed that they are not supporting any particular political party but the leader who are there who listen to their problems and try to solve it at the grassroots level. Conversely, some of the Mahars who supports to the BSP and RPI and look at this parties as their representative which only can represent them in the larger political sphere. These political resentment and differences however, not resulted into their socio-cultural and economic discriminations in contemporary Maharashtra. In socio-cultural and economic domain of the Dalits the positive change have been observed where Mahar, Mang and Chambhar together have challenged or contested the very idea of hierarchy based on Hindu caste system, and shown the unity of caste among them.

4.3 SOCIAL MOBILITY AND CHANGE

Among Mahar, Mang and Chambhar there has been a social mobility and changes happening over a period of time. This mobility and changes among Dalits in contemporary Maharashtra have challenging the traditional system of caste by contesting its very domination over other within them. As (Louis Dumont, 1966) in *Homo Hierarchicus* observed that the caste hierarchy even among lowers has dominated where these lower in response to get the higher position in the ritual hierarchy follow the culture or habits of higher caste , similar concept was termed as "Sanskritisation" by M. N. Srinivas. To this claim of Dumont the Dalits in contemporary rea fully challenged the very idea of Hinduism and its culture by contesting and rejecting its ritual hierarchy and discriminative practices based on caste, rather accepting it to get the higher position. This can be witness from Mahars, Mangs and Chambhars social mobility and changes against the traditional caste system where they significantly Mang and Chambhars assert the Ambedkarite and Buddhist identity. They have largely left their traditional occupations and now strive for the educational opportunities which state guarantees them, through which they can develop themselves socially, politically and economically. This mobility and change among Mang and Chambhar must be an outcome of the realisation that the Hindu religion have not given them anything but the same ritual and social status as other Dalit communities in the society.

Therefore, it is an importance of Ambedkar and Buddha in their life which would enlighten them from the traditional bondage of caste and inhuman condition and give them the life of self-respect, liberty, equality and fraternity. In contemporary Maharashtra this space has created for the transition for Dalits from being Hindu to being Ambedkarite to fight against the caste system. There are some non-Mahars also in contemporary Maharashtra who have been accepting the philosophy of Ambedkar and Buddha and converting into Buddhism. This mobility and changes among Dalits have its practical implications where the sense of Intercaste marriages among them have also been developed which challenge the traditional caste rules. And many non-Mahar caste among Dalits showing their interest in accepting the Ambedkarite ideology and Buddhism is a positive change among Dalits in

contemporary Maharashtra which forms the unity of caste among Dalits as it is supported by Mahars to challenge the dominant social structure.

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